

Kitsap Sun

Club Battle: Kitsap Cup will crown best golf team next month

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When you think of competitive golf on the Olympic Peninsula, annual tournaments such as the Bremerton City Amateur, Kitsap Amateur or

Kitsap Women's Invitational come to mind. Those events draw top amateurs from not only West Sound but throughout the Puget Sound region and beyond.

Well, there's a new golf tournament coming to the area — and this one is for local bragging rights.

It's a team event called the Kitsap Cup and it will be limited to golfers from local men's and women's clubs.

"I think it has the potential to have a neat tradition," said Steve DeCoy, a member of the men's club at Gold Mountain who reached out to other clubs to see if there was enough interest to pull it off.

The first Kitsap Cup will be played Sept. 13 on the Olympic Course at Gold Mountain Golf Club.

The idea is to rotate the tournament to other courses that are interesting in hosting. Who knows, in time, it could become the Ryder Cup or Walker Cup of Kitsap golf?

Participating clubs will field 12-person teams the first time around. All players must be active members of their club. The scoring format will be the cumulative net score with each team counting 10 of their best 12 scores.

"I was proposing two gross and eight or 10 net scores," DeCoy said. "I just threw my initial ideas out. I sent something to all of the clubs. Most gave me feedback. I went over the proposal on how to make the rules.

"Some clubs don't have the number of players others have, so we decided to let's just make it all net and keep it fun."

Each course is allowed to build their team any way they want. Golfers will play from the white tees, but senior men (62 and older) will be allowed to play from the forward tees and women will play from the ladies tees. Handicaps will be adjusted to fit the tees.

DeCoy hopes to have a list of all team rosters by Sept. 4.

Down the road, the rules and format could range. It was suggested that club champions, senior champions and women's champions be included in the tournament.

The winner of the Kitsap Cup will get to display the traveling trophy for a year at its course.

Some courses, no doubt, will take more pride in this tournament than others.

Some courses, as DeCoy pointed out, have bigger and more active men's and women's clubs.

Rolling Hills Golf Course in east Bremerton has the most active men's club around.

Al Moyer has been on the Rolling Hills men's club board for six years and he said they have around 280 members. They host a couple tournaments a month, drawing an average of 80-100 members. The Masters, held in July, the club championship and a two-man championship are the most prestigious club events. The weekly Wednesday sweeps, where members arrange their own tee times, are also popular, averaging about 50 players, Moyer said.

"We really do take pride in what we do," Moyer said. "I have people from other courses come up to me and go, 'What do you guys do? Why's your men's club so good?'"

Moyer tells them what he tells Rolling Hills' own members.

"It's not how the men's club makes it work," he said. "It's the members themselves. Everybody is friends. We know each other and really get along.

"The course is also really good about working with us. They set aside a block of tee times for us and that helps."

It costs \$65 to join the men's club at Rolling Hills, which also has two active clubs for women. That money goes to the GHIN (Golf Handicapping and Network Information service) and Washington State Golf Association to maintain handicaps, tournaments and \$10 goes into a hole-in-one honeypot.

"If you get a hole-in-one during the year (and it doesn't have to be a men's club event, only at Rolling Hills), you split the pot with everybody else at the end of the year," Moyer said. "I think we've had four so far this year."

Gold Mountain's men's club has increased its membership to 343 members, about where it was 10 years ago, DeCoy said.

But they're not getting the participation they should get.

"If we get 50 out, that's a great turnout," DeCoy said. "We're looking to change that. I want to find out what people are looking for."

Dues are \$55 with \$5 going to the Gold Mountain's junior golf program, and \$31 to the GHIN and WSGA for handicaps. The rest goes toward their tournaments. Members also get a free round after Oct. 1.

Gold Mountain director of golf Daryl Matheny runs a weekly "Big D" tournament on Wednesdays at noon at the Olympic Course, and the men's club holds four or five other events a year. Gold Mountain, like most courses, conducts its club championship this time of year. They also hold a pro-member, where local pros are placed with four men's club members for a competition that's followed by a barbeque.

Gold Mountain's men's club holds a Fall Fling, and DeCoy said there has been discussion about allowing members to bring a guest.

“We want to show people who don’t belong to a club to see what it’s like,” he said. “You don’t have to be hard core or really good. It’s a chance to meet new friends. Someone with a low handicap, two middles and a high handicapper will be on the same team.”

Most clubs in the area still participate in home-and-home matches with other clubs. Gold Mountain plays Wing Point Golf & Country Club in Bainbridge, The Home Course in DuPont, Port Ludlow Golf Club, The Cedars at Dungeness in Sequim, and Port Orchard’s Trophy Lake reached out earlier this month, DeCoy said.

DeCoy said he had never played Wing Point before.

“It was a wonderful opportunity,” he said. “I loved that course, but I played terrible. This old gentleman I’m with pulls out a driver on a par-3 hole that’s about 135 yards. I’m giving him seven strokes or something and thinking, ‘Well, this is going to be easy.’ He puts the driver on the green.”

It didn’t get better for DeCoy that day, but it didn’t matter.

“I had a blast. As embarrassing as I was — I didn’t even finish four, five holes — that gentleman made me feel so comfortable. I played with him again at our course and it was really neat.”

The Kitsap Cup is similar in structure to the home-and-homes, which uses a match-play format to determine the winners.

“I think it’s a good idea,” said Al Patterson, the pro at the Kitsap Golf & Country Club. “I know Kitsap struggles putting together teams for home-and-homes. This is kind of like that but on a bigger scale.”

Kitsap recently become a private-public club, but Wednesdays are still reserved for men’s club members.

“Our tee times are pretty full from 9 to 10:30 and from noon to 2,” Patterson. “We used to be solid all day. ... We don’t even do a Wednesday sweeps anymore.”

The women's club at Kitsap, according to Patterson, remains active with several events and solid participation throughout the year.

"The women have something every Tuesday from March to October," he said. "It's very well organized."

Moyer said Rolling Hills is excited about the Kitsap Cup.

"Everybody has that home-and-home type tournament," he said, "but you never get a bunch of clubs together for a tournament. I think it's a really neat idea to get everyone together to compete against each other."

DeCoy emphasized that it's not a Gold Mountain tournament.

"I really want all the clubs to take some ownership and pride in it," he said.

If they do, it has a chance to create a nice history for Kitsap golfers.